

## ASSOCIATIVE DATABASE SCANNING AND INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

### Abstract of the Disclosure

A method and device are disclosed for an associative and approximate, analog or digital scanning of databases that allows for the asynchronous accessing of data from a mass storage medium. The invention includes providing dedicated analog and digital circuitry and decision logic at the mass storage medium level for determining a key identifying the data of interest, continuously comparing the key to a signal generated from a reading of the data from the mass storage medium with an approximate or exact matching circuit to determine a pattern match, determining a correlation value between the key and the data as it is read in a continuous fashion, and determining a match based upon a preselected threshold value for the correlation value. The pattern matching technique eliminates any need to compare data based on its intrinsic structure or value, and instead is based on an analog or digital pattern. The key and data may be either analog or digital. This device and method may be provided as part of a stand-alone computer system, embodied in a network attached storage device, or can otherwise be provided as part of a computer LAN or WAN.